Chapter 4

Recruitment Process
Critical Analysis And
Recommendations

Passing out Parade(PoP) in the Parade Ground of IMA with the Chetwode building in the background.
CHAPTER – 4

RECRUITMENT PROCESS
CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Shortage of Officers

Reasons. The shortage in the officers' cadre has developed over a period of time due to gradual increase in the authorised strength of officers as part of expansion of the Army and sharp reduction in the intake of officers. But it is bewildering that the crisis has continued unabated and reached such alarming proportions\textsuperscript{114}. The shortfall in the strength of officers is attributable to the rejection of those not able to meet the requisite selection and medical criterion by the SSBs\textsuperscript{115} and a relatively risky and hazardous career in the Armed Forces compared to other options available in a fast developing and modern society which has a significant impact on the preferences of potential aspirants\textsuperscript{116}. Effect. The shortage has been affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. Field units have to be staffed up to a fighting strength at the cost of units in peace that bear the brunt. It is also responsible for increasing stress-related incidents in the Army\textsuperscript{117}. Though this is partially true, it has definitely increased the work load of the officer and has diminished the amount of personal attention a soldier receives from an officer, affecting inter-group communication\textsuperscript{118}.

Measures Adopted to Reduce the Shortages. In his reply in Rajya Sabha on 10 Mar 2010, the Defence Minister listed various measures adopted to reduce the shortages\textsuperscript{119}. These


\textsuperscript{115} www.pib.nic/release/rel_print_page.asp?relid=17774 dated 17 May 06 accessed on 14 Jul 07.

\textsuperscript{116} www.pib.nic.in/archive/1releng dated 31 Jul 02, accessed on 14 Jul 2007.


include – allowing time bound promotions up to the rank of Colonel, vigorous media campaign, professional courses to officers retiring at a young age, undertaking married accommodation project at various stations to overcome the shortage of accommodation, raising of two additional Services Selection Boards in 2003 to enhance capacity of screening and interview of candidates and enhanced interaction with target audience by officers from Recruiting Directorate and Command Headquarters and conduct of military mela.

Marketing is an irrelevant metaphor to explain the military’s challenge in attracting talent, since even market-based organisations do no better. A McKinsey & Co led report11, ‘War for Talent’ published in 2007, confirms the best MNCs are facing challenges in attracting and retaining top-quality talent, despite savvy marketing strategies. The fact that the Indian Army has a shortage of over 11,000 officers, which is a little under a quarter of its sanctioned strength, is a stark and irrefutable indicator that the Indian state is unable to attract the kind of talent required to ensure the HR profile that the Army needs. There is a marketing problem by way of being (un)able to convincingly persuade the qualified Indian youth to don uniform, at a time when there are many more attractive job opportunities (which is a familiar socio-economic and HR pattern with economies in transition) but the responsibility is less with the Army and more with the government of India. Marketing alone won’t solve the problem. But as any marketing professional will concede, a product can be packaged and advertised through skilful and innovative marketing only up to a point. If the product is inherently inadequate, mere marketing acumen will not suffice.

Today, there is no freedom of mobility in the job market for an army officer. The exit policies are archaic and the officers are akin more to a bonded labour, than a government functionary. The bogey of national security has allowed the military to get away with blatantly illegal and unethical exit policies for its soldiers for a long time. The long-term damage of an exit-barrier ending up as an entry-barrier has not even been considered by the military.

The armed forces need to view their trained officers as national assets rather than bonded labour. It needs to be understood that once a young man weighing various job options knows that he is free to leave the army whenever he wants to, he might well be attracted to getting
trained and groomed as a leader in a military institution, if only in the realistic hope that it might enable him to get a better job in the market than he would get after doing simple graduation/post graduation from a university elsewhere. If he chooses to leave after training, the Army should be happy that it has created a quality national asset who will prove his worth somewhere else. That limited, insulated mentality has to be shed to internalise and accept this thought. Though some might leave immediately after training, many will choose to serve as officers for varying lengths of time.

Presently, cadets passing out from the NDA get a graduation degree. They have to undergo further training in the training institutes of respective services before they become officers, but their academic qualification remains graduation. This additional training period plus an additional year or so of distance education after commissioning should enable all officers to get a post graduate degree in some disciplines. This will not only help increase their self esteem but also equip them to get better jobs and even pursue further studies should they choose to at any time.

The SSC acts as the support cadre to the regular cadre, which is twice its strength. A new proposal seeks to reverse the proportion. According to an internal report the shortfall of 11,000 army officers would be bridged in 20 years. The proposal is to take two short service officers for every permanently commissioned officer. This will help make up the shortfall in due course without affecting the promotion aspects caused by the pyramidal structure of the army. The army has sought to make SSC more lucrative by increasing the number of serving years from five to ten. Another proposal is to give them a two-year study leave at the end of their service to help them find a better second career option.

Another probable reason for the Armed Forces not getting the right type of youth for their officer cadre is that youth from rural background and less developed states like Rajasthan, UP, Uttrakhand, Jharkhand and Bihar are not able to qualify in the selection process it being very scientific and tough. Instead of waiting for end product in these areas, the Armed Forces may identify the potential candidates when the students are in Eighth standard through the medium of National Cadet Corps and then groom them to come up to the right standards. These young minds should be taken to various remote areas where Army is deployed on adventure trips and made to see for themselves how the love for the country and
adventure makes the adrenaline flow faster in the blood stream. Here, NCC can play a stellar role.

Remove stagnation at the middle level and thus improve promotion opportunities of the officers, close to that of civil and police services; After entering the army, an entry level officer must wait up to 13 years before donning the flashes of a lieutenant-colonel. Improve opportunities for officers and men to be able to spend more time with their families; re-establish social status and warrant of precedence of the armed force officers at the centre and state levels; compensate adequately the increased level of personal risk and hardships in the field areas; bridge salary and compensation gap between the private sector and government services, to the extent possible.

The Armed Forces will have to emulate the big IT companies and set up their own training academies - take the relatively rougher diamonds and polish them in-house. In other words, instead of trying to look for people with “officer-like qualities”, the Armed Forces will need to create them.

Publicity Campaign for Recruitment. Measures have been taken by Additional Director General (Recruiting) to make the youth of our country better aware of the career opportunities available for boys and girls in the Army as officers. As per the information available on the web site of the Ministry of Defence\textsuperscript{120}, the publicity campaign adopted by it to attract better talent, takes the following forms:-

- **Press Advertisements.** Advertisements are released through the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP) in the ‘Employment News’/‘RozgarSamachar’ and in newspapers in different languages for various entries. A composite advertisement on various entries in the Army is also brought out periodically both in English and Hindi.

- **Advertisements in Journals/Magazines.** These are normally brought out in the journals of educational institutions.

\textsuperscript{120}http://mod.nic.in/rec&training accessed on 14 Jul 12.
- **Hoardings.** Hoardings are erected at ARO premises as well as adjacent to engineering colleges all over the country to attract technical talent into the Army. DAVP approves the sites and thereafter, the hoardings giving detailed information are installed and maintained by them.

- **Printed Publicity.** Information folders, leaflets, brochures, data cards, posters and blow-ups, prepared through DAVP and private professional agencies are widely distributed.

**Media Campaign.** "Nat Geo’s Mission Army inspires their career choice” - They had made it to Mission Army-DeshKeRakshak, a programme on National Geographic that seeks to unveil facets of the Indian Army - from as many as 30,000 entries from across the nation. The three city-based youngsters, Priyanka Oswal, Ela Vohra and Rohan Takalkar, are among the five contestants. This addressed the issue by taking the candidates to the training premises of Indian Army and gives them a firsthand feeling of the training experience.

**Exhibitions and Fairs.** Each year, at the Defence pavilion at the India International Trade Fair, New Delhi, a stall is established where recruiting information is provided to the visitors. This is also done in other organised fairs, which are career oriented and meant for students.

**Image Projection Campaign (IPC)**

As per the information available on the web site of the Ministry of Defence, an advertising campaign was launched in September 1997 with the assistance of a professional advertising agency to meet out the shortage of officers and bring out awareness of the opportunities that are available on commissioning in the Army amongst the target group (youth). This is being done to project positive aspects of a wholesome career available to Service Officers. As mentioned by the Ministry, the aim of the campaign was to reach out to every corner of the country through the print, audio, visual and audio-visual media. It is also mentioned that an evaluation check of the impact of the campaign, through independent market research

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121 Indian Express, Pune, Mar 25 2011
122 Indian Express, Pune, Mar 25 2011
agency MODE, revealed that the campaign worked in the desired direction. On this basis, the campaign is continuing.

**Effectiveness of the Image Projection Campaign.** According to a reply given by the Defence Minister to Rajya Sabha on 07 Mar 07, the Image Projection Campaign helped in increasing awareness amongst youth about Army as a career. However, Rajat Pandit argues that the glitzy IPC about the good and gallant life in the Armed Forces is failing miserably to attract bright youngsters with Officer-Like-Qualities (OLQs) into their fold. It is considered that unless all those who appear in an examination are asked as to what motivated them to apply for the Army, it would be difficult to quantify the effectiveness of the campaign. Instead, we should devise ways and means by which, with less money, the Army can get un-paid for or free publicity in the print and the electronic media all over the country.

**Recruitment Cycle**

**Recruitment Cycle of UPSC.** In case of candidates appearing for the NDA entrance examination and the CDSE, the UPSC issues the advertisements calling for the applications. For all others, the Recruitment Directorate calls for the applications. The Recruitment Cycle at the Recruitment Directorate starts from the time the vacancies are informed to it by the Manpower Planning Directorate. Thereafter, the cycle goes through the following sequence when UPSC is involved:-

- Draft advertisement is forwarded by the Recruitment Directorate to the UPSC through the Ministry of Defence.
- UPSC receives the applications.
- Written test is conducted by the UPSC at various centers all over the country.
- Applications of qualified candidates are forwarded to the Recruitment Directorate by the UPSC.
- Recruitment Directorate informs the Selection Centers.
- Selection Centers call the candidates for interviews.

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123 [www.pib.nic.in/release](http://www.pib.nic.in/release) dated 07 Mar 07 accessed on 14 Jul 07.

124 *Times of India*, New Delhi, 08 Mar 07.
SSB interviews are conducted by the Selection Centers.

Results are informed to the Recruiting Directorate by the SSB.

Medical examination is conducted.

Joining instructions are issued by the Recruiting Directorate depending upon the SSB results, medical examination and the overall merit.

Candidates are inducted to the academies.

In the case of Technical Graduate entries and the NCC ‘C’ certificate holders applying for SSC and other miscellaneous categories, the applications are received by the Recruiting Directorate.

Critical Appraisal of the Recruitment Cycle

A critical appraisal of the Recruitment Cycle, based on the literature survey and personal experience reveals certain glaring issues, which if corrected would increase the effectiveness of the recruitment process. These are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

Advertisements. It is generally observed that the advertisements issued for recruitment appear mostly in the National Dailies and with very little frequency in the Regional Dailies. The audio visual campaign has its own limitations in reaching a wider base, in view of the inflexible timings of telecast and also reduced penetration in villages. It is also seen that some advertisements appear in Service magazines, which are mostly read by senior officer’s (e.g. an advertisement which appeared in “College of Defence Management” journal\textsuperscript{125}, is meaningless, as those having access to such journals are not a target group for a recruitment campaign. The money spent on such advertisements may be better utilised to reach to rural areas from where fewer candidates appear for the examinations.

Time Lag. There is a time lag of 10 months between the appearances of advertisement and the joining of the candidates in the academies in case of technical and NCC ‘C’ certificate entries. Similarly, in case of UPSC examinations, the period goes up to 15-18 months, as evident by the advertisement issued by UPSC for CDSE (II), 2007\textsuperscript{126}. The advertisement

\textsuperscript{125} Defence Management, Vol VI, No1, Apr 07.

\textsuperscript{126} Employment News, 27 Apr 07.
appeared in Employment News and other newspapers on 27 Apr 2007 for various courses commencing between Jul to Oct 2008. A candidate has to wait for long to join the academies, in these days when campus interviews and ‘On the Spot’ appointment letters are the order of the day. There is a requirement to reduce this time frame to the least. If necessary, Army HQ should conduct the examinations on its own. Recruitment of scientists in the DRDO is not done by the UPSC but by its own Recruitment Centres.

Centres for Written Test. UPSC conducts written tests at 42 centers all over the country. In today’s world, where the candidate is the king, it is considered that the examination should be conducted at more centers, at a scale of one per two to three districts, so that more candidates appear in the examinations. In addition, with the emergence of Information Technology Enabled Services the online methods to conduct the examinations should be evaluated and initiated.

Medium of Examination. The medium of CDSE is English or Hindi, thus placing the candidates studying in the regional mediums at a great disadvantage. We are thus not involving a major part of our population but retaining the small base of English and Hindi speaking people for selection. It is well known that the growth of regionalism has been leading to the growing use of regional languages as the medium of instruction. Major recruitable youth of the country lives in the villages and they study in regional languages till graduation. Should they be denied the benefit of appearing in the examination, just because they cannot appear in English or Hindi medium? Compare this with the Civil Services examination where candidates can appear in all the recognised languages. The necessity of effective communication skills for a Civil Servant and the Army officer do not vary very widely. Any communication skill deficit can always be improved by the candidates or the organisation can make a formal arrangement for the same. This anomaly, if rectified, would attract more candidates into the examination, thus affording an opportunity for a wider base of selection.

Infirmities of the Selection Process. The whole selection process in SSB is negative in approach and is directed towards finding limitations/angularities in a candidate’s personality. Positives are ignored and negatives are highlighted. The interview is conducted

127Narendra Kumar, “Officer Like qualities – Response”, Defence Watch, Apr 2006
by President/Deputy President of SSB, with the objective of probing for ‘clues to behaviour’ through adroit suggestions, comments and questioning to obtain inputs regarding strengths and shortcomings of the candidate. Psychological assessment is based on projective tests. These include intelligence test, thematic appreciation test, word association test, situation reaction test and self-description. Group testing is based on the premise that a group is a man’s most natural environment and his behaviour in a group will be his natural behaviour.128

**Error of contagious bias.** Some assessors in SSB suffer from ‘error of contagious bias’, in that they get biased by their own likes and dislikes and tend to judge candidate’s traits by their own standards and by comparison, without appreciating that attitudes and ethics have changed with time. This is normally referred to as ‘error due to false assumptions’. What was considered unethical not so long ago may have come to be accepted in the society as a fact of life now. It is an established fact that an assessor makes up to 10 value judgments on a candidate in the first 30 seconds of an interaction. It influences further course of the assessment unless an assessor exercises due caution. Unfortunately, many assessors tend to develop an attitude of their own infallibility. They believe that they have the expertise to judge suitability of a candidate in a few minutes. Such assessors tend to make up their mind at the outset, and the subsequent assessment gets reduced to a mere formality devoid of purpose and objectivity. This is the single most important reason for distortions in the whole process.

**Attitude of Playing Safe.** Most assessors in SSB suffer from the ‘error of central tendency’ syndrome, in that, they hesitate to give clear-cut assessments and keep most candidates as border-liners. Candidates not falling in the category of Adequate or Inadequate zones are considered border-liners. This is primarily due to their lack of confidence in their own assessment. They fear that their assessment may be at variance with the assessment of other two assessors and that they may stand out as the ‘odd-man’. Therefore, they prefer to keep a candidate as a border-liner and leave final decision making to the final conference which is attended by all the three assessors, interviewers, group testing officer and psychologist. During the conference, they watch the trend of discussion and generally go with the majority opinion. These ‘Border-liners’ form a whopping 36 percent of all

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candidates. It implies that the whole selection process is unable to determine suitability of 36 percent candidates. It is certainly a cause for concern as it reflects weaknesses of the assessors and their inability to perceive the required qualities with accuracy.

**Inadequate Importance to Potentiality and Trainability.** Potentiality refers to the qualities which may not be fully developed at the time of selection but the candidate shows adequate potential for their subsequent development with facilitating environment and training. On the other hand, trainability is ability to assimilate training and acquire/develop required quality traits. Although the basic attitudes do not change appreciably, there are a number of developable qualities like power of expression, emotional development, and width of interest, drive and insight. The present day candidates come from varied background and may not have had the opportunity to be exposed to many facilities, whereas most candidates came from public schools earlier. Therefore, potentiality and trainability have become important factors to be considered while assessing candidates. As gauging of potentiality and trainability is much more difficult than to determine current standards, there is a need to carry out an appraisal of the selection process and impart required training to the selection staff.

The selection process should focus on finding out if a candidate has the required qualities and the potential to be a service officer. All assessors should be asked to award marks to various qualities as per the assigned weightage. They should not be asked to brand a candidate fit or unfit. An overall merit list should then be prepared and call letters issued accordingly as per the vacancies available. Such an arrangement will eliminate tendency to create border-liners as also ensure that the best material available is inducted to fill all vacancies. In case all 36 percent border-liners are graded fit, there would be no shortfall at all. With an APR of 431, it can be reasonably assumed that if an objective merit list is prepared, the top order will be of sufficiently good quality to fill all vacancies.

**Raising of Entry Qualifications and Age.** Undoubtedly, the services would like to attract the brightest youth, as used to be the case till the 1980s. Unfortunately, in a blunder of monumental proportions, the services lost the ‘first pick advantage’ that it had enjoyed up till then. Earlier, Class X was the minimum qualification for entry to the NDA and the age group was 15 to 17 years. Candidates could appear for the written test while preparing for their Class X examination, with their candidature remaining provisional subject to their
passing Class X. Thus, the average age of candidates at the time of joining the NDA used to be between 16 to 16½ years and they used to get their commission at around 20 years of age after four years of training.

With a view to award BA/BSc degrees at the end of their training at the NDA, entry qualification was raised to 10+2 and consequently, the age group rose to 16½ to 19 years. Now, the average age of cadets at the time of entry into the NDA is over 18 years and they get their commission at the age of over 22 years. A comparison of the old and the new systems reveals interesting aspects.

As entry qualification was pitched at Class X, the NDA was the first career option available to the youth. Invariably, it attracted the best talent. Parents encouraged their sons to opt for the NDA and be settled in a career rather than remain uncertain as regards entry into other streams. Youth at the age of 15-17 years were extremely motivated with idealism and nationalism ruling high. Their mental and physical robustness could be easily developed. An officer commissioned at the age of 20 years served the defence forces for a much longer period than an officer commissioned at 22-23 years, as the retirement age remains fixed. It means that for the same quantum of resources invested in training an officer, the services got better returns by way of longer service span. Officers commissioned at the age of 20 helped keep the age profile of the services young at the crucial levels of platoon, company and battalion commanders.

On the other hand, the only advantage accruing from higher qualification and age is that the cadets get graduation degrees at the end of their NDA training. A graduation degree cannot be the sole justification for forfeiting opportunity to pick the best youth for the services. With enhanced entry age, students have multiple career options, the services being one of them. A graduation degree cannot be the sole justification for forfeiting opportunity to pick the best youth for the services. With enhanced entry age, students have multiple career options, the services being one of them.

**Age at Entry.** One of the reasons attributed to the low quality of intake is the ‘Last Resort Option’ exercised by some young men, after they find it difficult to go elsewhere.
Balaram strongly argues to do away with the graduate entries both in the technical and non-technical streams and have only ‘10+2’ as the entry for all. He also recommends that the NDA curriculum must aim at B.Tech and MBA and not BA or B.Sc as at present. The ‘10+2’ technical entry schemes being run at CME, MCEME and MCTE exactly do the same. Vijay Madan recommends that they must be recruited even at a much younger age after 10th class and the duration of the NDA training period can be increased to enable cadets to earn a bachelor's degree. Others recommend ‘10+1’ entry. It is considered that in view of many opportunities available to the youth today after ‘10+2’, a career in the Army remains a lesser priority. It will therefore be better to catch them young after ‘10+1’ level.

**Tests at the SSBs.** We live in a world where ‘mock tests’ and ‘online tests’ are very common, whether for Joint Entrance Examination and Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering of the IITs, Common Admission Test of the IIMs etc. A prospective candidate for the Army has no facility of such mock tests, unless he goes through the same in some of the coaching institutes, at a very high cost. There is a requirement for the Ministry of Defence / Defence Institute of Psychological Research to introduce such tests free and online so that a candidate has a fair idea of the tests. It may also facilitate some candidates to self-screen themselves, before they appear in the SSB and thus increase the percentage of selection in the SSBs.

**Hoardings.** A number of hoardings are displayed in front of engineering colleges and Army Recruiting Offices. While the efficacy of these cannot be ruled out completely, a better option may be to have them at Railway Stations/Bus stations too, where transit population will be more and people seeing an advertisement would have lot of spare time to go through these. Similarly, buying advertisement space behind railway tickets may be considered. Army may even consider giving general information of the opportunities available behind provisional pass certificates and marks sheets of students. Similarly, Employment Placement Officers of the universities should be exposed to Army’s career opportunities formally by conducting them in various Army locations all over the country.


Towards a More Effective Publicity Campaign. Presently, the officials of the recruiting Directorate, teams from Command Headquarters and Army Recruiting Offices (ARO) i.e. erstwhile BRO/ZRO, carry out motivational lectures in selected schools and colleges in their area of responsibility. Similarly, the NCC units have also been incorporated to deliver motivational lectures in educational institutions. It is considered that instead of sending an official from the ARO, an officer from that particular school or college, who is doing well in service, should be identified and deputed to deliver a motivational lecture, so that the responsiveness would be better. When the target group sees and listens to one of their alumni in uniform motivating them to follow suit, the youth immediately identify with him and consider the suggestion more seriously. For doing this, Army HQ should prepare a data base of its officers, their native places and schools/colleges they studied etc and depute them to these areas accordingly. This data base would also serve a number of other purposes.

Coaching by State Governments. Many State Governments arrange free coaching for SC/ST candidates for Civil Services examinations. It is recommended that they extend similar facilities for all sections of the society at the district level for getting into the Army also.

Urban Bias. It has been commented by many researchers that the officers’ recruitment has an urban bias. In the survey conducted by Chhibber, it was revealed that the semi urban and rural areas of the country were not well represented. It is of utmost importance to concentrate in these areas.

Representation from North-East. It is a common experience that the representation of candidates from the North-Eastern states is far less than proportionate. There is a need to focus media campaign in these states so as to widen the recruitment base from these regions.

Influence in Career Choice. In a survey carried out by RN Mahajan, a survey of metropolis-based sample of students, serving and retired officers was carried out in 1999. The students were drawn from Noida and Delhi schools and colleges and NCC

132 www.pib.nic.in/release dated accessed on 14 Jul 07.
Republic Day Camp 1999. Though the survey had an urban bias and somewhat constrained, it brought out significant aspects. Some of the relevant findings of the study along with comments are as under:-

- **Influence people in Career Choice.** In choosing a career, 36% opined that they were influenced by their teachers and parents, 2% by friends and balance reportedly took their independent decision. It is apparent that in case of students belonging to the rural backgrounds, the percentage influenced by teachers and parents would be still higher.

- **Sources of Knowledge about Armed Forces.** 58% knew from newspapers, magazines and the like, 26% from movies and TV serials and the balance from school and college textbooks. Therefore, more emphasis should be laid on newspapers, magazines and textbooks which can be referred repeatedly.

- Non-material values of the service attract students the most.

- 39% students reported that they would like to enlist for a short term, as if to test the waters and then reenlist if they so wish and 18% wanted to enlist for 10 years and then go for a second career. This proves that a secured career was least appealing to the students and job satisfaction was found to be a higher priority than job security.

- **Demotivating Factors.** Demotivating factors in terms of difficult entry, unsettled family life, truncated career and difficulty in premature exit were shared by students and serving officers in the survey. Physical risk of service did not deter the students much. These areas need to be addressed.

**Quality of the Officers.** There seems to be a wide disparity in the opinion of senior generals about the quality of the officer cadre. In the survey carried out by Lt Gen Mahajan in 1999, 66% of the retired officers stated that it declined in their service. R Prasannan, in

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his article titled ‘Indian Forces Unfit to Fight’ mentioned that despite crippling shortages everywhere, very few able bodied and sharp-brained men are lining up to defend their country. Similar opinion was expressed by Gen V P Malik that the officers’ shortage has been seriously affecting the Army, in quantity as well as quality.\textsuperscript{137} In his reply to Rajya Sabha on 17 May 06, the then Defence Minister informed the House that the main reason for shortage in the Army is the nonavailability of sufficient number of suitable candidates meeting Army’s laid down criteria.\textsuperscript{138} John Wilson\textsuperscript{139} says that there has been a perceptible fall in the quality of men who were chosen to lead the Army and this had a domino effect on the entire structure despite a seemingly rigorous promotion procedure. The aspect of quality of recruitment was also discussed in the meeting of the nine ex-Chiefs of Army Staff in Oct 04.\textsuperscript{140} It is considered that unless adequate measures are taken to widen the base of recruitment to get the required quality, India’s beloved Army in the words of John Masters may remain manned by first rate men, led by second rate officers with third rate equipment.\textsuperscript{141}

Making Short Service More Attractive. Numerous efforts are being made to make the short service more attractive. Important ones along with comments/suggestions are as under:-

- **Inflexibility in Engagement Terms.** As per the current rules, SS officers cannot leave on their own after five years of service. Their release has to be approved by the Army HQ and its decision is final. This is a great disincentive for the SS officers. The MoD considers that increase in intake may be achieved by the extension of minimum service of SS officers from 5 to 10 and from 10 to 14 years but this does not seem to hold water. There is a requirement to allow the officers to leave on their own after five years of service without approval from Army HQ.

\textsuperscript{137} The Hindu, New Delhi, 18 Jun 07.

\textsuperscript{138} www.pib.nic.in/release dated 17 May 06, accessed on 14 Jul 07.

\textsuperscript{139} The Pioneer, New Delhi 12 May 04.

\textsuperscript{140} The Pioneerer, New Delhi, 21 Oct 04.

\textsuperscript{141} Asian Age, New Delhi, 28 Jan 04.
Civil Service Examinations. SS officers, on release should be allowed to take reduced number of papers in the Civil Services examination, as it was in vogue earlier. Else, they can be given weightage for their experience in the Paramilitary forces.

Improved Package. The Estimates Committee recommended that the package for the SS officers should be improved upon so as to bring it at par with what was being offered to officers recruited under Emergency Commission Scheme. This needs to be earnestly considered as for a given duration after release he has no income and needs to survive from his savings. Also, Gen Deepak Kapoor recommended that "We have recommended that a certain amount of monetary gratuity be given to the officers after about 10 or 14 years of service," and "Also recommended tremendous enhancement of that gratuity so that it becomes attractive for him to come and go out of the service with a certain amount in his pocket so that he can look for a second avenue if he wishes to," he added.

Study Leave. Gen Deepak Kapoor opined that to reach out to the youth, the army has in the recent times proposed to make the Short Service Commission (SSC) an attractive option for the youth by encouraging them to go for additional qualification such as a Doctorate or an MBA to enhance opportunities in the private sector when they leave the force. In that short service commission officers should be granted study leave of one/two years after initial period of five years of engagement, before they quit the service. This would be a great motivator and incentive to join the Army, as all cannot afford higher education on their own after release from the Short Service and before settling in a new job. This can easily be considered if the armed forces consider opening their own colleges.

Employment Fairs. Career fairs are common today. A SS officer desirous of a job after release has to apply to the Resettlement Directorate or fend for himself. This is a great demotivating factor and a frustrating experience. It is recommended that Army should conduct employment fairs exclusively for the released SS officers and

142 Mahajan, op cit, pp72
143 The Indian Express, New Delhi, 09 Feb 2009
144 The Indian Express, New Delhi, 09 Feb 2009
invite industries for recruiting them. They can show case the talent of the SS officers to the prospective employers under one roof and earn the good will of the released SS officers who will also act a good referral group. CII, FICCI etc. will thus be able to recruit SS officers with little effort and will continue to look for such fairs. It is noteworthy that the IAF is planning its first ever placement fair in New Delhi on 22 Sep 07.\textsuperscript{145} IAF also has MOUs with certain private organisations for absorption of their officers. It is high time that the Army considers such MOUs for the benefit of released SSC officers. Once successful; they can be extended to all regular officers also.

- **Lateral Induction.** Bharat Verma is of the opinion that “Lateral induction is the only way to attract young but savvy population to the toughest profession where risk to life factor is an everyday affair. Once the Army officers know that after a short and demanding tenure, they have an assured career elsewhere, with seniority intact, and their families will not be on the roads, the deficit in the cadre will disappear.”\textsuperscript{146} The above view has been further reinforced by The Hindu\textsuperscript{147} by suggesting that ex-soldiers can be offered alternative opportunities in administration or policing. It also cautions that the State Governments for whom recruitment is an important source of legitimacy building have not been receptive to these ideas- but the logjam must be broken.

- **Exit Interviews.** ASS officer is generally interviewed by his IO and may be RO at the time of his release from the service which is a general routine. A regular feedback from such interviews may not be reaching the Recruiting Directorate as an important input for designing subsequent campaigns. It is felt that all SS officers proceeding on release should be interviewed by the Army Headquarters so as to know in detailed reasons for his release and his recommendations to make the career more attractive. In such interviews, many issues, which otherwise the officer may not like to put on paper, would also come out. This type of structured feedback must be introduced.

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Indian Express}, New Delhi, 16 Sep 07.

\textsuperscript{146} Bharat Verma, “Lateral Induction”, \textit{Indian Defence Review}, Feb 07.

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{The Hindu}, New Delhi, 05 May 07.
IPS/PMF Officers on Deputation. An entry into any government service as an officer should be allowed only after a person serves as an SSCO for at least five to seven years. This, of course, has its own constraints and problems. Alternatively, all IPS and PMF officers should be deputed to the Army for five years immediately after their training period. This would have a dual advantage – Army would have more officers and these organisations would get more trained officers who would be an asset in the long run.

Employee Referrals. In the civil industry, ‘Employee Referrals’ are common. Under this scheme, serving employees can refer prospective candidates to the employer and if they are suitable, the employee who referred the candidate gets an incentive. A similar one can be introduced in the Army. Serving officers will thus be able to refer suitable candidates with potential to be selected. This will enhance the selection rate of the prospective candidates.

Cost to Company. Most of the private companies advertise the emoluments in the form of Cost to the Company (CTC), which includes gross salary (pay and allowances) and perks and benefits (LTC cost, medical reimbursement cost, transport allowance and subscription to various clubs etc). Thus while a young executive may be drawing Rs 1,00,000 per month on CTC basis, he may actually be getting less than half of that amount as ‘Carry Home Pay’. Taking a cue from this, the Army may also work out CTC and advertise this instead of quantifying mere pay and allowances.

Trial Show of Documentaries in Films. Earlier, all cinema theatres used to screen DAVP-sponsored documentaries before screening of any commercial film. These used to cover important national events. These are no longer being shown regularly. It is appropriate that these be restarted and Army should insist for a regular coverage of its activities in these films.

Seminars. Seminars must be held regularly at Army Headquarters level to discuss ways and means to make the career more attractive. In these seminars, more representation should be given to young officers from the regular/SS stream to vent their views instead of senior generals expressing their views about the perceived opinion of youngsters. The senior officers may be out of sync with the realities of the perceptions of the youth.
Armed Forces Radio and TV. To ensure correct projection of the Army, Armed Forces may consider having their own Radio and TV channel which would be cost effective in the longrun. As of now, various channels air / beam programmes about Armed forces at intervals, the timing of which may or may not suit the target group. If thereis an exclusive channel, any prospective candidate knows the single point source of information needed. Moreover, the Armed forces can design their own programmes as per the requirement. Till such time, Army should consider promoting TV serials which project the life and values of the military service and the mutual connection between the military man and the society. All programmes should be interspersed with recruitment drive campaigns.

Compulsory Coverage. To increase the awareness about the Armed forces, a few questions about the Armed forces should part of general knowledge papers of all competitive examinations at the national and the state level.

Defence Quiz. A regular defence quiz may be conducted by the Army and the Armed Forces in the media and the winners should be taken around and exposed to the Army environment as they can become ambassadors of good will when they get back.

Text Books. The coverage of the Armed Forces in the college and school text books is negligible. Any society cannot expect a child to suddenly start developing interest in the Army unless he is exposed to it in a regular and formal way about their contribution. This would help a child to iconise the Army career. Three books can be prepared\(^{148}\) – one each at the elementary, secondary and college level- and these should be extremely readable and profusely illustrated covering the challenges to India’s security, and the Armed forces role in meeting these.

Gate Keepers. The gate keepers or the referral group or those who influence the target youth are the teachers and the parents and to some extent the placement officers in the colleges. Right now, there is no formal attempt to educate / expose them to the virtues of an Army career. It is considered that this important group may be taken around the cantonments and some field areas, so that they are fully aware of the avenues in the Army and recommend them to the target youth.

\(^{148}\)Mahajan, op.cit
Macro Management of the Officer Corps. Army’s attempt to provide a full life career to its officers has been termed as an “Arithmetical Absurdity” because of its peculiar cadre structure. In most countries, 50%-60% of the officers intake is of temporary hands so as to ensure youthful profile and smooth career progression for full lifers. Some even recommend that initially everyone should be in short service and qualify for permanent commission after 8-10 years. It is considered that this may not be a workable proposition. For overcoming the shortages, we need short as well as long term solutions.

Media Projection. The public image of the Armed Forces is moulded by the media to a very large extent. The public image is also influenced by the self image of the serving and the retired personnel. Surprisingly, the reverse also applies. Public also includes the recruitable youth and their gate keepers (Parents and Teachers). Nowadays, a quick survey of the print and electronic media reveals that any small aberration happening in the Army is many times blown out of proportion - be it the Rations Scam, Ketchup Colonel, Booze Brigadier, or Liquor - Selling General. No doubt that the society cannot tolerate even a minor lapse from the Army which it holds at the highest pedestal of reverence. Excellent acts of selfless service or bravery displayed by the Army personnel do not find a place in the media with that much detail, sincerity or frequency. It is necessary to carry the stories of our war heroes and gallantry award winners regularly in the media throughout the year.

Publicity Train. The Army has been spending a considerable amount on IPC. It has been opined by many that awareness about the Army in the rural areas is not satisfactory. It is considered that the Army should run publicity trains all over the country on a few important routes on the lines of “Medicins Sans Frontiers” trains being run regularly or Mobile Exhibition Train named “Azadi Express” which was flagged off on 28 Sep 07 to commemorate the First war of Independence and 60th Anniversary of India’s Independence. This Mobile Exhibition train touches 70 cities and returns to its flagging off station i.e. New Delhi after eight months. On similar lines, the proposed trains should carry all important publicity material and equipment typical to each arm and service as is displayed in the defence exhibitions held regularly. They should plan halts at important

149 Indian Express. New Delhi, 15 Aug 07.

150 Ibid, 28 Sep 07.
locations, set up camps there, demonstrate Army’s equipment and employment to the public and make them aware about the career opportunities. From these camps, mobile vans can fan out into the interiors. A novel measure like this would bring in lot of free publicity in all the media for a considerable time. 60th anniversary of Independence is the most appropriate time for the same. Five to six trains should take off from a common point, traverse the country and assemble at a common place after the tour. If successful, the exercise may be repeated regularly.

In addition to the above, the existing military rakes held with Indian Army for the purpose of move of troops and equipment can be painted with pictures highlighting the achievements of the Indian troops. These rakes moving across the country while ferrying troops and equipment will provide free publicity.

**Toll Free Number.** Presently, any prospective candidate can access MOD’s/Army HQ’s/other web sites for getting information about the Army. For any specific queries, a candidate has to dial Recruiting Directorate and speak to the concerned officer about recruitment - related queries. These queries will have to be answered by the officer in his office time when he is equally busy with his office work and deadlines. Today, we are living in a world of ‘Toll Free’ Numbers/Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) etc. It would be worthwhile for Army to have its own Toll Free number operative on a ‘24x7’ basis which can be accessed by any one wanting any information about the Army and particularly on recruitment related issues. This would not be cost prohibitive. A novel number like “11111 11111” or “99999 99999” may be given to the call centre so that it would be easy to remember the same.

**Increase in Intake in the Academies.** On the presumption that the academies are running more or less to their full capacities, if more candidates are available, what do the academies do? The intake into the academies has to be increased, either by increasing the strength of each batch or decreasing the training period. V P Malik[151] suggested that as we did during the Kargil war, the training period can be reduced by six months as most of the training imparted in IMA during the last six months is the same as the on-the-job training given in the units. Though this is debatable, a combination of reduced training period and expanding

[151]The Hindu, New Delhi, 18 Jun 07.
the existing capacities would have to be thought of. Once, more candidates are available for joining the Army by means of measures as suggested above, lack of sufficient training facilities should not be a bottle neck, as there is a feeling that contrary to popular perception, promoted by the Army itself, there is no dearth of qualified youngsters ready to join the forces but it is the lack of sufficient training facilities that is the real issue

Model for Stake Holders. A model has been prepared for all stake holders to address the issue of correct handling of the reference groups so that they will be able to advise the target group properly. The same is at Appendix B along with detailed explanation.